

1 **Title**

2 **Utilisation of the Prestwick Chemical Library ® to identify drugs that**  
3 **inhibit the growth of Mycobacteria**

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21 **Running title:** FDA approved drugs active against mycobacteria

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26 **Abstract**

27 Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious bacterial disease that kills approximately 1.3  
28 million people every year. Despite global efforts to reduce both the incidence  
29 and mortality associated with TB, the emergence of drug resistant strains has  
30 slowed any progress made towards combating the spread of this deadly  
31 disease. The current TB drug regimen is inadequate, takes months to complete  
32 and poses significant challenges when administering to patients suffering from  
33 drug resistant TB. New treatments that are faster, simpler and more affordable  
34 are urgently required. Arguably, a good strategy to discover new drugs is to  
35 start with an old drug. Here, we have screened a library of 1200 FDA approved  
36 drugs from the Prestwick Chemical library ® using a GFP microplate assay.  
37 Drugs were screened against GFP expressing strains of *Mycobacterium*  
38 *smegmatis* and *Mycobacterium bovis* BCG as surrogates for *Mycobacterium*  
39 *tuberculosis*, the causative agent of TB in humans. We identified several  
40 classes of drugs that displayed antimycobacterial activity against both *M.*  
41 *smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG, however each organism also displayed some  
42 selectivity towards certain drug classes. Variant analysis of whole genomes  
43 sequenced for resistant mutants raised to florfenicol, vanoxerine and  
44 pentamidine highlight new pathways that could be exploited in drug repurposing  
45 programmes.

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47

## 48 **Introduction**

49 Tuberculosis (TB) remains a major global health issue, despite it being over  
50 twenty years since the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared TB a global  
51 emergency (1). In 2016, TB killed around 1.3 million people and now ranks  
52 alongside HIV as the leading cause of death globally. It has been estimated  
53 that almost 6.3 million new cases of TB are to have occurred in 2016; 46% of  
54 these new TB cases were individuals co-infected with HIV. Alarming, an  
55 estimated 4.1% of new TB cases and 19% of previously treated TB cases are  
56 infections caused by Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB), and in 2016 an  
57 estimated 190,000 people died from this form of the disease. Furthermore,  
58 extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) has now been reported in 105  
59 countries, and accounts for approximately 30,000 TB patients in 2016. If these  
60 numbers are to reduce in line with milestones set by the WHO End TB Strategy,  
61 alternative therapeutic agents that target novel pathways are urgently required.

62

63 Drug repurposing (or drug redeployment), is an attractive approach for the rapid  
64 discovery and, in particular, development of new anti-TB drugs (2, 3). Due to  
65 the time and cost of bringing new molecular entities through the developmental  
66 pipeline to clinic, drug repurposing offers an expedient option, in part due to  
67 pre-existing pharmacological and toxicological datasets that allow for rapid  
68 profiling of active hits (4). In this study, we used GFP-expressing strains of *M.*  
69 *smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG in order to screen the Prestwick Chemical Library  
70 ® for antimycobacterial drugs. Together with drugs that have previously been  
71 identified from similar screens (5), we identified a number of novel hits that  
72 display good antimycobacterial activity which were also confirmed in

73 *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* H37Rv. We sought to characterise the mode of  
74 action of selection of hits, by performing whole genome sequencing with variant  
75 analysis on laboratory resistant mutants. This study highlights both the  
76 usefulness and circumspection required when utilising *M. smegmatis* and *M.*  
77 *bovis* BCG in drug repurposing screens to new anti-TB agents.

78

## 79 **Results**

80

### 81 **Primary screening of the Prestwick Chemical Library ® against *M.*** 82 ***smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG.**

83 To identify which of the 1200 FDA approved drugs in the Prestwick Chemical  
84 Library ® inhibit the growth of mycobacteria, a high throughput fluorescence  
85 screen was used to measure GFP expression in strains of both *M. smegmatis*  
86 and *M. bovis* BCG (GFP microplate assay [GFPMA]) (6). *M.*  
87 *smegmatis*\_pSMT3\_eGFP and *M. bovis* BCG\_pSMT3\_eGFP were cultured in  
88 96-well plates in the presence of 20 µM compound from the Prestwick Chemical  
89 Library ®. GFP fluorescence was measured at specified time points and data  
90 was normalized against both positive and negative controls to produce a scatter  
91 graph of the survival percentages (Fig. 1). In order to assess the reproducibility  
92 and robustness of the GFPMA HTS, we calculated Z' factor values for each of  
93 the assay plates used to screen the 1200 compounds of the Prestwick  
94 Chemical Library ® against both *M. smegmatis*\_pSMT3\_eGFP and *M. bovis*  
95 BCG\_pSMT3\_eGFP. The Z' values of the primary screen against *M.*  
96 *smegmatis* vary between 0.4 and 0.9 across each of the assay plates used in  
97 the screen (Fig. S1). In case of the primary screen for *M. bovis* BCG, the Z'

98 values are consistent between 0.8 and 0.9 across all assay plates (Fig. S1).  
99 However, since all assay plates used in the experiment derived  $Z'$  values  $\geq 0.4$ ,  
100 all data generated was deemed suitable for further processing (7). In order to  
101 understand the variability in the data and significance of the hits identified from  
102 the scatter plot (Fig. 1), we analysed the variance of data both between and  
103 across replicate experiments carried out using *M. smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG.  
104 The overall coefficient of correlation ( $r^2$ ) values for replicate assays were  
105 calculated to be 0.63 and to 0.89 for *M. smegmatis*\_pSMT3\_eGFP and *M. bovis*  
106 BCG\_pSMT3\_eGFP, respectively (Fig. 2). This indicates increased variance in  
107 the data for assays conducted with *M. smegmatis* compared to screens  
108 performed using *M. bovis* BCG. We analysed the frequency distribution of data  
109 both within and across each primary screen using *M. smegmatis* and *M. bovis*  
110 BCG (Fig. 3). For *M. smegmatis*, we observed that 31.5 % of the compounds  
111 screened in the library induced  $\leq 75$  % survival of bacterial cell growth in the  
112 primary screen (Fig. 3). For BCG, 21 % of the library induced  $\leq 75$  % survival  
113 of bacterial cell growth in the primary screen (Fig. 3). We applied a minimum  
114 cut-off of  $\leq 25$  % bacterial cell survival at 20  $\mu$ M compound, as a parameter that  
115 defined an antimycobacterial hit that would be further investigated in  
116 downstream experiments (Fig. 1). In this regard, we observed an almost  
117 identical hit rate of 6.9% and 6.8% for compounds inducing  $\leq 25$  % survival for  
118 *M. smegmatis* and BCG, respectively (Fig. 3).

119

120 The initial screen against *M. smegmatis* generated 83 hits which inhibited the  
121 survival of this fast-growing species of mycobacterium below 25% (Fig. 1A).  
122 The screen against the slower growing mycobacterial strain *M. bovis* BCG

123 revealed 81 hits (Fig. 1A) which inhibited the growth of the bacteria below 25%  
124 (Fig. 1B). Categorisation of these hits (<25% survival) into pharmacological  
125 groups reveals that an almost equal number of fluoroquinolones, macrolides,  
126 polyketide antibiotics, antimycobacterial drugs, and antiseptics display  
127 inhibitory activity against both *M. smegmatis* and BCG whilst the  
128 aminoglycosides displayed more inhibitory activity towards *M. smegmatis*  
129 compared to BCG (Fig. 4). Other notable classes of drugs that inhibit the growth  
130 of both *M. smegmatis* and BCG include the amphenicols, glycopeptides and  
131 non-ribosomal peptide antibiotics, antihistamines, acetylcholine esterase  
132 inhibitors, antiemetic, antimalarial, antiprotozoal and surfactants (Fig. 4).  
133 Notable species-specific inhibitors affecting only *M. smegmatis* were also  
134 identified belonging to antiestrogen, antiarrhythmic and antipsychotic drugs (Fig.  
135 4). For BCG, it appears that the cephalosporin antibiotics are only able to inhibit  
136 the slower growing mycobacterial species and do not affect the faster growing  
137 saprophytic organism *M. smegmatis*. Other significant drug classes that only  
138 inhibit BCG include anticancer agents, antidiabetics, anticonvulsants and  
139 angiotensin antagonists (Fig. 4).

140

141 All hits from the primary screen (displaying <25% survival) were filtered to  
142 remove all known antimycobacterial drugs and a significant number of other  
143 antimicrobial agents (5). The remaining drugs were then clustered into one of  
144 three groups based upon their inhibitory activity against either fast-growing (*M.*  
145 *smegmatis*) or slow-growing (*M. bovis* BCG) strains of mycobacteria, or those  
146 showing overlapping activity. Each cluster of drugs was further ranked and

147 given a priority score that was based on the apparent potency of the drug and  
148 potential novelty of its mode of action from literature-based searches.

149

### 150 **Secondary screening and hit confirmation against *M. smegmatis***

151 Minimal Inhibitory Concentrations (MIC) were determined using the  
152 standardized broth dilution method and then subsequently measured on solid  
153 medium in order to ascertain the concentration required to generate resistant  
154 mutants (Fig. S2). Among the drugs tested against *M. smegmatis*, the most  
155 potent was meclocycline sulfosalicylate with a liquid and solid MIC of 0.10  $\mu\text{M}$   
156 and 0.2  $\mu\text{M}$ , respectively (Table 1). Auranofin also displayed a relatively low  
157 solid MIC of 6.0  $\mu\text{M}$  although this was 22-fold higher than its liquid MIC values  
158 (0.27  $\mu\text{M}$ ). Other drugs tested for MIC determination were alexidine and  
159 chlorhexidine which both exhibited relatively low MIC values of 6.15 $\mu\text{M}$  and  
160 1.98 $\mu\text{M}$ , both of which are used as antimicrobials in dentistry (8). The estrogen  
161 receptor modulating drugs clomiphene citrate, raloxifen, toremifene and  
162 tamoxifen citrate (9)(10) displayed liquid MIC values ranging from 9.03 $\mu\text{M}$  to  
163 26.64 $\mu\text{M}$  (Table 1). GBR12909 (Vanoxerine), a dopamine transport inhibitor  
164 (11), displayed a liquid MIC of 26.48  $\mu\text{M}$  (Table 1). Two of the drugs tested  
165 against *M. smegmatis*, auranofin and ebselen, displayed MIC values of 0.27 $\mu\text{M}$   
166 and 18.5 $\mu\text{M}$  respectively while other drugs which were initially identified as hits  
167 from the primary screen (fendiline hydrochloride, sulocitidil, apomorphine,  
168 nisoldipine, sertraline and fluspirilene) displayed relatively high MIC values that  
169 ranged from 77 $\mu\text{M}$  to 827.5  $\mu\text{M}$  (Table 1). Some drugs initially examined were  
170 excluded from further solid media MIC testing (alexidine dihydrochloride,

171 ebselen and fluspirilene). Fluspirelene displayed a relatively high liquid MIC and  
172 alexidine dihydrochloride was discounted for further study due to its structural  
173 and functional similarity to chlorhexidine. Further investigation of ebselen  
174 ceased due to mode of action deconvolution that has been previously  
175 determined elsewhere (12). Ebselen is an organoselenium compound  
176 approved by the FDA with a well-known pharmacological profile and is currently  
177 being investigated for clinical use in the treatment of bipolar disorders and  
178 strokes. Previous studies have shown that ebselen displays antimycobacterial  
179 properties and is also effective against multidrug resistant *Staphylococcus*  
180 *aureus* (MRSA) (2). In *M. tuberculosis*, ebselen acts by covalently binding to an  
181 active site cysteine residue in antigen 85. Antigen 85 is a complex of secreted  
182 proteins (Ag85A, Ag85B and Ag85C) which play an important role in the  
183 synthesis of trehalose dimycolates (TDM) and mycolylarabinogalactan (mAG)  
184 (12).

185

## 186 **Secondary screening and hit confirmation against BCG**

187 MIC studies of the compounds listed in Table 2 revealed thonzonium bromide  
188 as having the lowest MIC value of 0.16 $\mu$ M. Thonzonium bromide is a quaternary  
189 ammonium monocationic compound which is used as a surfactant and a  
190 detergent and has been known to disrupt ATP dependant proton transport in  
191 vacuolar membranes along with alexidine dihydrochloride, which are  
192 responsible for pH regulation in yeast and *Candida albicans* causing growth  
193 defects (13). Florfenicol, a fluorinated analogue of thiamphenicol with broad  
194 spectrum activity against Gram negative bacteria and strains resistant to  
195 chloramphenicol and thiamphenicol (14), displayed broth and solid MIC values



196 of 0.67 $\mu$ M and 6  $\mu$ M against *M. bovis* BCG, respectively (Table 2). Florfenicol  
197 is known to influence the microbiota of the intestine reducing the amount of  
198 uncultured bacterial species similar to *Corynebacterium* and *Mycobacterium*  
199 (15). Josamycin, a 16-membered macrolide with inhibitory activity against both  
200 Gram negative and Gram positive bacteria (16), displayed potent activity  
201 against BCG with an MIC of 0.1 $\mu$ M (Table 2). Interestingly, we identified three  
202 antihistamines as having inhibitory activity against BCG. Astemizole had the  
203 lowest MIC value of 17.8 $\mu$ M within this group followed by tripeleennamine, with  
204 an MIC of 41.9 $\mu$ M and olopatadine with the highest MIC value of 202.3  $\mu$ M in  
205 (Table 2). Astemizole (used for general allergies, asthma and rhinitis),  
206 tripeleennamine (hay fever and rhinitis) and olopatadine (allergic conjunctivitis)  
207 are mildly anti-cholinergic and act as H1 receptor antagonists (17–20). Of the  
208 antidiabetic drugs displaying activity towards BCG, glipizide and rosiglitazone  
209 have an MIC value of 191.1  $\mu$ M and 43.15  $\mu$ M, respectively (Table 2). Glipizide  
210 is a second-generation sulfonylurea drug that is prescribed for hypoglycaemia  
211 in type II diabetes and is known to act by stimulating insulin production and  
212 correcting cellular lesions which occur during diabetes mellitus (21, 22).  
213 Rosiglitazone, on the other hand, functions by activating peroxisome  
214 proliferator activated receptors in adipocytes and sensitising them to insulin (23).  
215 Pinaverium, that inhibits L-type calcium channels arresting influx of the Ca<sup>2+</sup>  
216 (24), had an MIC of 28.3 $\mu$ M. Two other drugs which displayed relatively high  
217 MIC values were granisetron and phentermine (Table 2). Granisetron, an  
218 antiemetic drug which is an agonist to the 5-hydroxytryptamine-3 receptor,  
219 stimulates the vagus nerve responsible for reflex motility response (25), had an  
220 MIC value of 210.6 $\mu$ M. Phentermine, which has been prescribed as an appetite

221 suppressant to control obesity and acts as an agonist to the human TAAR1  
222 (Trace Amine Associate Receptor 1) (26), displayed an MIC of 375.00  $\mu$ M and  
223 was not tested further due to the high concentrations required for inhibitory  
224 activity. These drugs were then further tested to establish MICs on solid media  
225 in order to determine accurate concentrations to generate spontaneous  
226 resistant mutants for mode of action studies. We observed that, upon solid agar  
227 MIC testing against BCG, the general trend was that the drugs displayed 5 to  
228 100-fold higher MIC values when compared to MIC values obtained by broth  
229 dilution method. For some of the drugs this was attributed to low solubility in  
230 solid media as many precipitated during the cooling of the agar medium.  
231 Glipizide, olopatadine and granisetron yielded solid MIC values greater than  
232 0.5mM; these drugs precipitated out at higher concentrations and appeared to  
233 show no noticeable inhibitory activity against BCG (Fig. S3). Rosiglitazone  
234 displayed the highest MIC value at approximately 1.5 mM. Thonzonium and  
235 florfenicol had a 5-fold increase in their solid MIC values but were still around  
236 5 $\mu$ M and effectively inhibited the growth of BCG on solid agar (Table 2).  
237 Pentamidine, astemizole and pinaverium had solid MIC values of around 0.05  
238 mM while there was a 2-fold increase in the MIC value for tripelennamine  
239 (compared to its liquid MIC) of 0.1 mM (Table 2). All compounds listed in Table  
240 1 and Table 2 were tested in an Alamar Blur<sup>®</sup> assay against *M. tuberculosis*  
241 (Supplementary Information) and the drugs that displayed any notable anti-TB  
242 activity are listed in Table 3. Both ebselen and auranofin displayed MICs of  
243 18.51  $\mu$ M and 0.27  $\mu$ M, which are in close agreement with previously published  
244 values (12, 27). In addition, the estrogen receptor modulating drugs  
245 clomiphene and raloxifene inhibited the growth of *M. tuberculosis* H37Rv with

246 MICs of 7.59  $\mu$ M and 22.10  $\mu$ M, respectively (we were unable to accurately  
247 determine the MIC for Tamoxifen) (Table 3). Finally, GBR12909, used in the  
248 clinic to treat cocaine addiction) inhibited the growth of *M. tuberculosis* with an  
249 MIC of 26.64  $\mu$ M. It is interesting to note however, that all of the drugs listed in  
250 Table 3 were identified as hits from screens conducted against *M. smegmatis*  
251 and not *M. bovis* BCG (Table 1 and Table 2).

252

253 **Generation of spontaneous resistant mutants to determine mode of**  
254 **action.**

255 We attempted to generate spontaneous resistant mutants in both *M. smegmatis*  
256 and BCG against a selection of drugs identified in Table 1 and Table 2,  
257 respectively. However, we were only able to obtain drug-resistant isolates for  
258 meclocyline sulfosalicylate, tamoxifen citrate and GBR12909 in *M. smegmatis*  
259 (Table 4) and florfenicol, pentamidine and tripeleennamine in BCG (Table 5).  
260 Analysis of the *M. smegmatis* meclocyline sulfosalicylate mutant revealed a  
261 synonymous single nucleotide polymorphism (SNPs) mutation in the gene  
262 MSMEG\_3619 (*Mtb* ortholog Rv1856c), a probable oxidoreductase deemed  
263 non-essential by the Himar-I based transposon mutagenesis<sup>21</sup>, but also  
264 showing importance as having a growth advantage which results in an  
265 improvement in fitness when disrupted (28). A single SNP (P122S) was also  
266 observed in MSMEG\_5249 (*Mtb* ortholog Rv1093) *glyA1* which is a serine  
267 hydroxymethyltransferase with possible roles of glycine to serine inter-  
268 conversion and the generation of 5, 10-methylenetetrahydrofolate which plays  
269 an important role in providing precursors for cellular redox balancing,  
270 methylation reactions and a role in thymidylate biosynthesis (Table 4). *GlyA1* is

271 also thought to be an essential gene (28, 29) and it has also been identified as  
272 one of the proteins which undergoes PUPylation (Ubiquitylation by prokaryotic  
273 ubiquitin protein) in mycobacteria (30). The *M. smegmatis* tamoxifen citrate  
274 resistant mutant exhibited a frame shift mutation in the gene MSMEG\_6431  
275 (*Mtb* ortholog Rv3849) *espR* which encodes for a protein involved in  
276 transcriptional regulation of the three genes Rv3136c-Rv3614c required for the  
277 ESX-1 system (Table 4). EspR binds to the promotor region and regulates ESX-  
278 1, therefore controlling virulence of mycobacteria (31). Spontaneous resistant  
279 mutants raised against GBR12909 in *M. smegmatis* produced consistent  
280 multiple mutations in MSMEG\_3033 (*aroB*) (Table 4). *AroB* is predicted to be  
281 an essential gene as studied in *M. tuberculosis* (28, 29) and it encodes for 3-  
282 dehydroquinote synthase, which is one of several enzymes participating in the  
283 shikimate biosynthetic pathway (32). *AroB* is a homomeric enzyme, is the  
284 second enzyme in the shikimate biosynthetic pathway and is present in various  
285 bacterial species such as *Corynebacterium glutamicum*, *Escherichia coli*,  
286 *Bacillus subtilis* and other fungi, plant and apicomplexan parasites (33–35).  
287 *AroB* makes for an important target due to its essentiality in *M. tuberculosis* and  
288 absence of this biochemical pathway in mammals (28, 29, 33). Spontaneous  
289 resistant mutants were generated for florfenicol in BCG, revealing a point  
290 mutation in BCG\_1533 (*echA12*) gene which encodes for a putative enoyl CoA  
291 hydratase (Table 5). EchA12 has been shown to be membrane localized within  
292 the mycobacterial cell membrane (36), however the gene was not found to be  
293 essential through Himar-I based transposon mutagenesis (28, 29). It has been  
294 suggested that EchA12 is involved in lipid membrane metabolism and is found  
295 to co-localise with thioredoxine A (36) and CtpD, which is an ATPase involved

296 with the metalation of proteins secreted during redox stress (37). Three  
297 additional point mutations were also observed in the florfenicol resistant mutant.  
298 A single guanine to adenine point mutation in the gene BCG\_3185 (PPE50)  
299 which encodes for a protein belonging to the PPE family, generates a G251D  
300 mutation. BCG\_3508 (*rpsI*) encodes for a probable 30S ribosomal protein and  
301 contains a P17A mutation in the florfenicol mutant (Table 5). Florfenicol is a  
302 fluorinated form of thiamphenicol which belongs to the amphenicol family of  
303 antibiotics, whose mode of action is through binding to the 23S rRNA of the 50S  
304 ribosomal unit (38). Finally, we also observed a V271A point mutation in  
305 BCG\_3755c, which encodes for a glycerol kinase (GlpK), which catalyses the  
306 rate limiting step in glycerol metabolism of converting glycerol to glycerol-3-  
307 phosphate (39, 40). Mutations in *glpK*, have previously been observed when  
308 generating resistant mutants to drugs in an attempt to deconvolute their mode  
309 of action (41, 42). In our investigation of pentamidine activity, we identified an  
310 identical mutation in *glpK*, two separate non-synonymous SNPs in BCG\_0763,  
311 which encodes for putative membrane protein with a domain of unknown  
312 function, and a single SNP in BCG\_1609, which encodes for *mmpI6* (Table 5).  
313 Mycobacterial membrane protein large (MmpL) are membrane proteins  
314 involved in shuttling lipid components across the plasma membrane and have  
315 been known to play an important role in drug resistance mechanisms,  
316 membrane physiology and virulence of the bacterium (43). The tripelennamine  
317 mutant had a single point mutation in the promoter region of BCG\_3090, a  
318 multi-drug transport integral membrane protein (*mmr*) (Table 5), which is a  
319 known efflux pump involved in drug resistance with high susceptibility to  
320 quaternary compounds (44). This suggest that exposure to tripelennamine

321 might induce a mutation that causes increased overexpression of Mmr which  
322 could alter the ability of the bacterium to efflux drugs.

323

## 324 **Discussion**

325 Screening compounds against *M. smegmatis* has a distinct advantage over  
326 the slower growing *M. bovis* BCG strain in terms of its shorter generation time,  
327 thus expediting the generation of screening data and turnaround of results.  
328 However, using *M. smegmatis* as a screening organism is less efficient in  
329 determining antitubercular compounds than *M. bovis* BCG. It was observed  
330 during a screen of the LOPAC library against *M. tuberculosis*, *M.*  
331 *smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG that 50% of the drugs inhibiting *M.*  
332 *tuberculosis* were not identified in *M. smegmatis* while it was only 21% of the  
333 drugs that were not identified in *M. bovis* BCG. In addition, it was observed  
334 that 30% of proteins in Mtb do not have conserved orthologs in *M. smegmatis*  
335 (5). Despite this fact, bedaquiline, the most recent drug given FDA approval for  
336 the treatment of MDR-TB, was initially discovered through a whole cell screen  
337 assay against *M. smegmatis* (45), which makes the case for not excluding *M.*  
338 *smegmatis* as a model organisms for antitubercular drug screening.

339

340 Although genetically similar, there are a number of physiological variations  
341 between *M. tuberculosis* and *M. bovis* BCG which have been attributed to the  
342 differential expression of around 6% of genes across their respective  
343 genomes. During the exponential growth of both organisms, major variations  
344 were observed for genes involved in cell wall processes, intermediary

345 metabolism and respiration and hypothetical proteins (46). In addition, in *M.*  
346 *tuberculosis* the PE/PPE genes were found to be highly expressed whereas in  
347 *M. bovis* BCG, there are a higher number of transcriptional regulators that are  
348 overexpressed during exponential growth. These variations in gene expression  
349 profiles of mycobacteria partly explain why different classes of drugs  
350 differentially inhibit each strain utilised during screening experiments (Fig. 4).

351

352 Target deconvolution of hits that emerge from whole cell screening efforts has  
353 long been the bottleneck of phenotypic-based drug discovery; often huge  
354 investment of time and resource is required to identify the precise molecular  
355 target of active compounds (47). Interestingly, in the case of early stage drug  
356 discovery in *M. tuberculosis*, there seems to be an apparent trend whereby  
357 inhibitors of cell growth/viability obtained through phenotypic screening efforts  
358 tend to inhibit membrane targets such as DprE1, MmpL3, QcrB and Pks13  
359 (48). This relatively high probability of hits inhibiting membrane targets could,  
360 in part, be due to the hydrophobicity of the inhibitors screened in libraries  
361 against mycobacteria (48, 49). For instance, several drugs from the Prestwick  
362 Chemical Library® that inhibit the growth of mycobacteria have an average  
363 clogP value of 5.7 (48). Hydrophobic drugs have a tendency to enter into the  
364 lipid layers of the mycobacterial cell envelope and then move laterally through  
365 the membrane due to their inability to cross the plasma membrane into the  
366 cytoplasm. While traversing the bilayer, these hydrophobic compounds  
367 interact with membrane proteins and thus there is an increased probability of  
368 the drugs inhibiting such targets thereby producing membrane protein related

369 mutations in spontaneously generated mutants during mode of action studies  
370 (48). Alexidine dihydrochloride and thonzonium bromide were amongst the hits  
371 observed in this study that have uncoupling properties and might generated a  
372 membrane protein mutation (13). In this study, screening the Prestwick  
373 Chemical Library® also identified inhibitors such as calcium channel blockers,  
374 antihistamines, antifungal azoles and, unsurprisingly, a variety of antinfectives  
375 (Fig. 4). Calcium channel inhibitors are generally small hydrophobic molecules  
376 which have the ability to enter the phospholipid bilayer and can diffuse through  
377 the membrane inhibiting metabolic functions due to interactions with proteins  
378 and boundary lipids (50). Antifungal azoles, which have been shown to elicit  
379 inhibitory activity against mycobacteria, act by targeting the CYP121 and  
380 CYP130 cytochrome P450 systems (51). Our screening of the Prestwick  
381 Chemical Library® and analysis of unique emerging hits, provides new  
382 impetus to explore drug repurposing as a feasible and efficient way of mining  
383 for new anti-mycobacterial drugs.

384

## 385 **Materials and Methods**

### 386 **Bacterial strains, plasmids and growth media**

387 *M. smegmatis* mc<sup>2</sup>155 was electroporated with pSMT3-eGFP and  
388 transformants were selected on Tryptic Soy Agar supplemented with  
389 hygromycin B (20 µg/ml). Single colonies were used to inoculate 10 mL of  
390 Tryptic Soy Broth supplemented with Tween 80 (0.05% v/v) at 37°C with  
391 shaking at 180 rpm. *M. smegmatis* mc<sup>2</sup>155 harbouring pSMT3-eGFP was  
392 diluted 1/100 into Middlebrook 7H9 supplemented with glycerol (2 mL/L) and  
393 Tween 80 (0.05% v/v) and further sub-cultured at 37°C with shaking at 180 rpm.



394 *M. bovis* BCG was electroporated with pSMT3-eGFP and transformants  
395 selected on Middlebrook 7H10 containing OADC (10% v/v) and hygromycin B  
396 (20 µg/ml). Single colonies were inoculated into 50 mL of Middlebrook 7H9  
397 containing OADC (10% v/v) and Tween 80 (0.05% v/v) and statically cultured  
398 at 37°C for ~ 5 days. Both *M. smegmatis* mc<sup>2</sup>155 and *M. bovis* BCG expressing  
399 eGFP were quantified by sampling 200 µL of cells which were 2-fold serially  
400 diluted across a black F-bottom 96-well micro-titre plate and fluorescence was  
401 measured using a BMG Labtech POLARstar Omega plate reader (Excitation  
402 485-12 nm, Emission 520 nm).

403

#### 404 **Validation of eGFP reporter screen.**

405 Batch cultures of *M. smegmatis* pSMT3-eGFP and *M. bovis* BCG pSMT3-eGFP  
406 were adjusted to give a basal reading of 20,000 Relative Fluorescent Units  
407 (RFU) by diluting into fresh Middlebrook 7H9 containing Tween 80 (0.05% v/v)  
408 with additional OADC (10% v/v) for *M. bovis* BCG (final well volume of 200 µL).  
409 The anti-mycobacterial drugs isoniazid, ethambutol, streptomycin,  
410 pyrazinamide and rifampicin were included in over a range of concentrations  
411 on assay plates. Wells containing mycobacterial culture in the presence of 1 %  
412 DMSO represent high controls, whilst wells containing only media constitute  
413 low controls. Assay plates were cultured for 48 hours in a ThermoCytomat  
414 plate-shaker incubator (100 % humidity at 37°C with 180 rpm plate agitation)  
415 and eGFP fluorescence was measured kinetically every 2 hours.

416

417

418

419 **Medium Throughput Screen of the Prestwick Chemical Library**®

420 The Prestwick Chemical Library® (1200 drugs) was purchased from Specs.net  
421 preformatted in master plates so that all compounds were solubilized in 100 %  
422 DMSO at a final concentration of 10 mM. A fully automated Hamilton Star work-  
423 station was used for all liquid handling protocols. Compounds were loaded into  
424 black F-bottom 96-well assay ready plates (Greiner) followed by 200 µL of  
425 either *M. smegmatis* pSMT3-eGFP or *M. bovis* BCG pSMT3-eGFP resulting in  
426 a final drug concentration of 20 µM in the primary screen. Wells containing only  
427 cells (high control) or cells in combination with 50 µg/mL rifampicin (low control)  
428 were included on each assay plate to establish positive and negative controls,  
429 respectively. Assay plates were cultured at for 48 hours in a Thermo Cytomat  
430 plate-shaker incubator (100 % humidity at 37°C with 180 rpm plate agitation)  
431 and eGFP fluorescence was measured kinetically every 2 hours to generate  
432 growth curves for individual wells of each assay plate. Data from the final 48 hr  
433 read was normalized using the following equation:

434 
$$\% Survival = \left( \frac{x - \bar{x} \text{ (negative controls)}}{\bar{x} \text{ (positive controls)} - \bar{x} \text{ (negative controls)}} \right) \times 100$$

435

436 Each assay plate was checked for robustness and reproducibility by calculating  
437 the Z'-factor using the following equation;

438 
$$Z' = 1 - \frac{3(\sigma_p + \sigma_n)}{|\mu_p - \mu_n|}$$

439 For the primary screen, positive controls and negative controls were included  
440 in columns 1 and 2 respectively. The Z' was found to be on average 0.75, well  
441 above the Z'>0.5 which is widely regarded as being suitable for HTS. All 1200  
442 drugs from the Prestwick Chemical Library® were screened in duplicate and

443 hits were identified as inhibiting cell growth by  $\geq 75\%$ , as determined by  
444 measuring eGFP fluorescence.

445

#### 446 **Validation of selected hits and MIC determination in liquid media**

447 Drugs selected for further study were purchased from a variety of commercial  
448 vendors. Drugs were dissolved into 100% DMSO resulting in a 10 mM stock  
449 that was subsequently used to generate a 10-point 3-fold serial dilution which  
450 provided a dose response curve with maximum and minimum drug  
451 concentration of 500  $\mu\text{M}$  and 0.0254nM, respectively. Data was normalised as  
452 described above. The concentration of drug that is required to inhibit cell growth  
453 by 99% was calculated by non-linear regression (Gompertz equation for MIC  
454 determination, GraphPad Prism).

455

#### 456 **MIC determination on solid agar**

457 Selected compounds identified from the secondary MIC screen were further  
458 tested for MIC evaluation using solid agar media. Drugs were diluted from a  
459 10mM stock, mixed individually in 2mLs of molten 7H10 agar and dispensed in  
460 square partitioned petri plates. Plates were incubated at 37°C and solid MIC  
461 was determined based on absence of colonies.

462

#### 463 **Spontaneous mutant generation**

464 Spontaneous mutants were generated by plating  $10^8$  cells (*M. smegmatis*  
465 and/or *M. bovis* BCG) per plate on 7H10 agar with drug concentrations of 2.5x,  
466 5x and 10x the solid MIC values. Plates were incubated at 37 °C for a week or  
467 30 days for *M. smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG, respectively. Colonies that

468 appeared on plates containing drug at 10X MIC were inoculated into 7H9 re-  
469 plated onto 7H9 agar in the presence drugs at 10X MIC in order to confirm  
470 resistance. Genomic DNA was isolated for both wild type *M. smegmatis* and *M.*  
471 *bovis* BCG strains together with resistant mutants (52, 53). Genomic DNA was  
472 submitted to MicrobesNG (<https://microbesng.uk/>) for whole genome  
473 sequencing and SNP variant analysis of the sequence in comparison to the wild  
474 type genomic DNA for each strain.

475

#### 476 **Conflicts of Interest**

477 None to declare

478

#### 479 **Supplemental Material**

480 Supplementary material (Figures S1 to S4) for this article are provided for online  
481 publication.

482

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668 **Figure Legends**

669

670 **Fig. 1. Primary screening of the Prestwick Chemical Library® compounds**

671 **against *M. smegmatis* (A) and *M. bovis* BCG (B) using a GFPMA assay.**

672 GFP measurements were recorded after a defined period of incubation of

673 mycobacteria in the presence of 20 µM compound from the Prestwick Chemical

674 Library®. Data was normalised to control wells and is expressed as mean %

675 survival from n=2 biological replicate experiments. The red dashed line depicts

676 <25 % cell survival as determined by residual GFP fluorescence.

677

678 **Fig. 2. Correlation analysis of the primary screen against the Prestwick**

679 **Chemical Library®. Scatter graphs representing correlation analysis of the**

680 **cumulative data of the percentage survivals between n=2 biological replicate**

681 **experiments (run A and B) during the primary screen of the Prestwick Chemical**

682 **Library® against *M. smegmatis* (A) and *M. bovis* BCG (B). The average of run**

683 **A and B data sets from both *M. smegmatis* (A) and *M. bovis* BCG were plotted**

684 **against each other (C).**

685

686 **Fig. 3. A comparative frequency distribution of the primary screening**

687 **against the Prestwick Chemical Library®. Each bar represents the**

688 **comparative frequency distribution primary screening data (averaged) for *M.***

689 ***smegmatis* (black) and *M. bovis* BCG (red). % survival data for was 'binned'**

690 **into groups of 5%.**

691

692 **Fig. 4.** Comparison of the hits emerging from the primary screen active against  
693 both *M. smegmatis* and *M. bovis* BCG. Drugs were grouped into drug  
694 classifications and are plotted as frequency of hits against either *M. smegmatis*  
695 or *M. bovis* BCG.  
696  
697

698 **FIGURE 1**

Figure 1 A

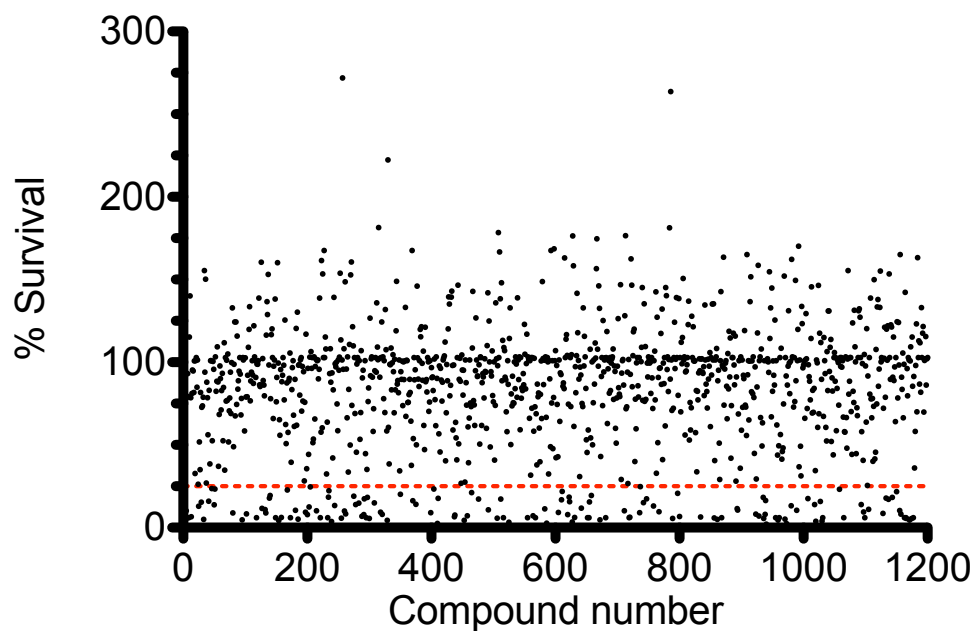
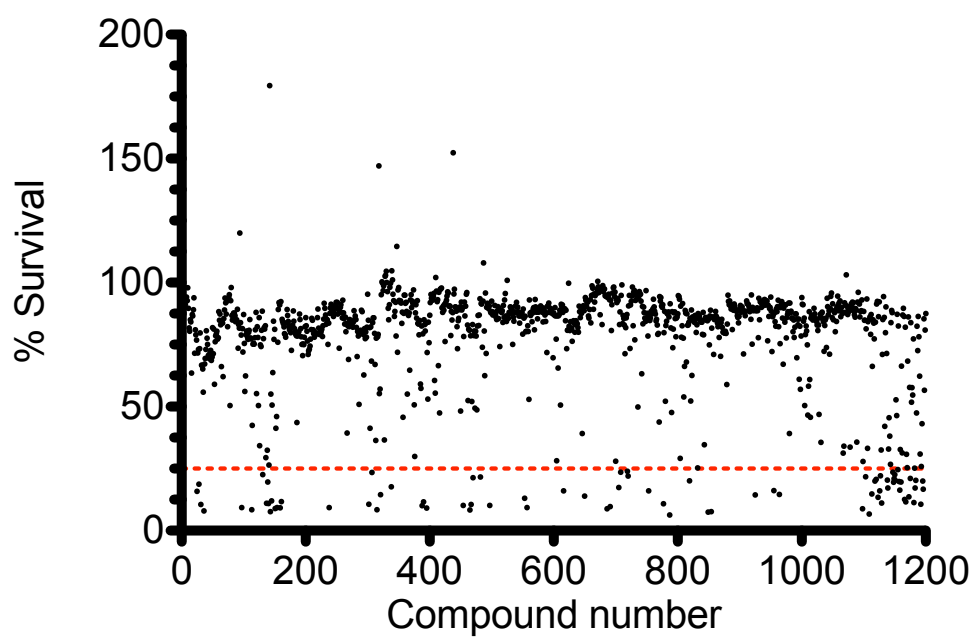


Figure 1 B



699  
700

701 **FIGURE 2**

Figure 2 A

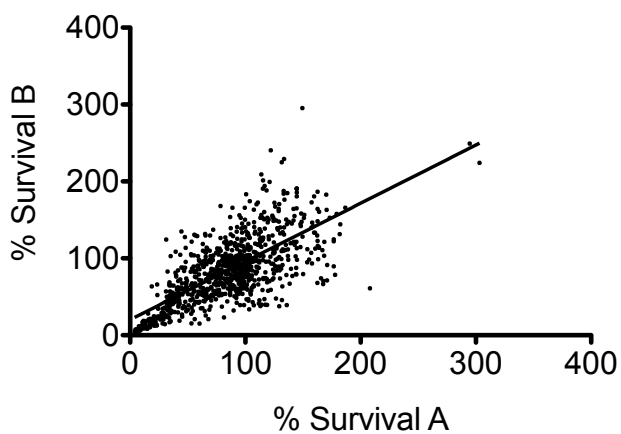


Figure 2 B

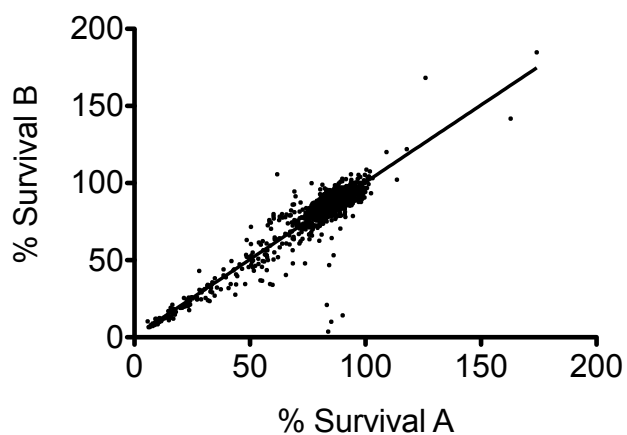
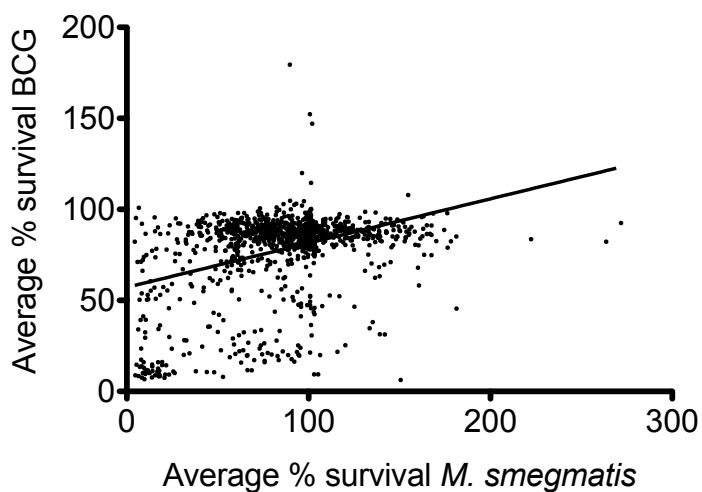


Figure 2 C

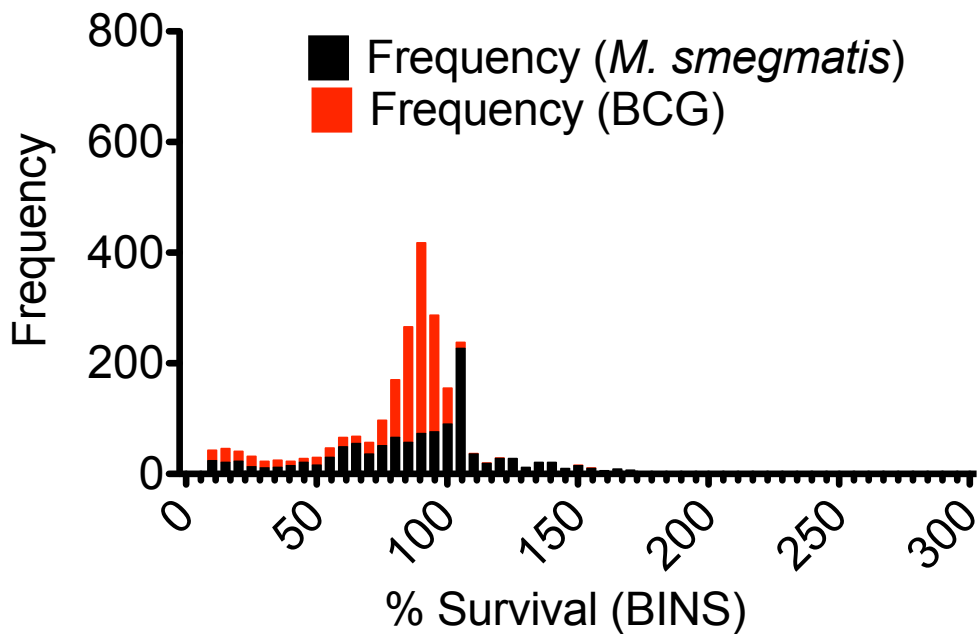


702



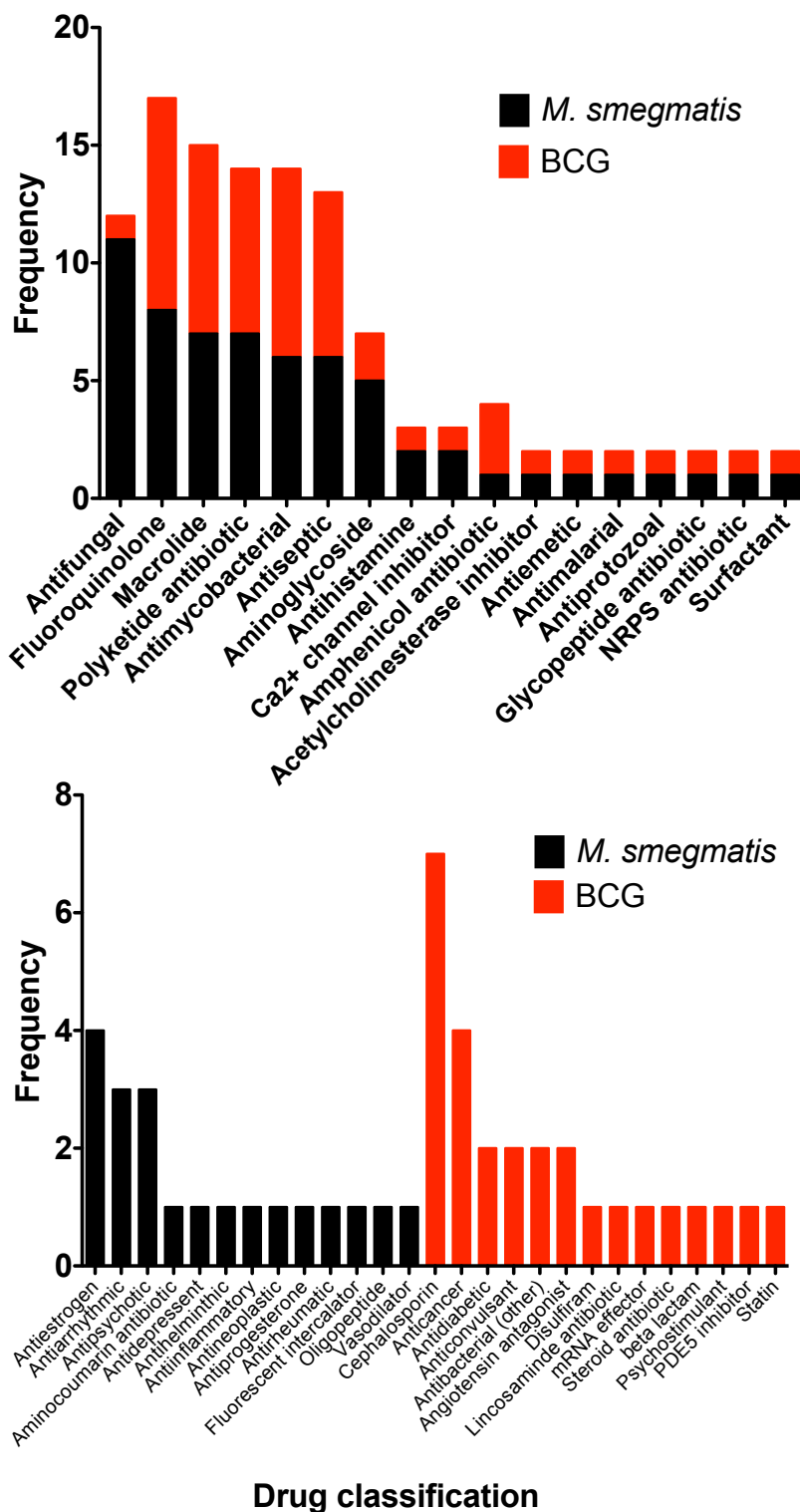
703 **FIGURE 3**

Figure 3



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705

706 **FIGURE 4**



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711 **TABLES**

712

713 **Table 1. MIC determination of selected drugs shortlisted as hits from the**  
714 **whole cell screen of the Prestwick Chemical Library® against *M.***  
715 ***smegmatis*.** MICs were determined using both liquid and solid growth mediums.  
716 (N/T) - not tested. (\*) – selected for generation of drug resistant mutants.

717

718

<b>Shortlisted Drugs (<i>M. smegmatis</i>)</b>	<b>Liquid MIC (µM)</b>	<b>Solid MIC (µM)</b>	<b>Selected for generation of resistant mutants</b>
Mecloxyline sulfosalicylate	0.10	0.20	*
Auranofin	0.27	6.0	
Chlorhexidine	1.95	16.0	
Alexidine	6.15	N/T	
Clomiphene citrate	9.03	37.5	*
Ebselen	18.51	N/T	
Raloxifene	22.1	312.5	
Toremifene	23.76	62.5	
Tamoxifen citrate	26.48	31.25	*
GBR 12909	26.64	62.5	*
Fendiline hydrochloride	77.57	15.63	
Sulocitidil	87.22	625	
Apomorphine	241.7	625	
Nisoldipine	396.2	100	
Sertraline	526.7	90	
Fluspirilene	827.5	N/T	

719

720

721

722 **Table 2. MIC determination of selected drugs shortlisted as hits from the**  
723 **whole cell screen of the Prestwick Chemical Library® against *M. bovis***  
724 **BCG. MICs were determined using both liquid and solid growth mediums. (N/T)**  
725 **- not tested. (\*) – selected for generation of drug resistant mutants.**  
726

Shortlisted Drugs ( <i>M. bovis</i> BCG)	Liquid MIC ( $\mu\text{M}$ )	Solid MIC ( $\mu\text{M}$ )	Selected generation resistant mutants
Thonzonium	0.16	5	*
Florfenicol	0.67	6	*
Pentamidine	3.23	50	*
Astemizole	17.78	50	
Pinaverium	28.29	50	
Josamycin	0.10	100	
Tripelennamine	41.9	100	*
Rosiglitazone	43.15	$\geq 1500$	
Glipizide	191.10	$\geq 500$	
Olopatadine	202.30	$\geq 500$	
Granisteron	210.60	$\geq 500$	
Phenteramine	375.00	N/T	

727  
728  
729

730 **Table 3. MIC determination of selected drugs against *M. tuberculosis***  
731 **H37Rv.** MICs were determined in liquid growth media using the Alamar Blue®  
732 assay (Fig. S4).  
733

Shortlisted Drugs ( <i>M. tuberculosis</i> )	Liquid MIC ( $\mu\text{M}$ )	
Ebselen	18.51	734 735 736
Clomiphene	7.59	737 738
GBR 12909	26.64	739
Raloxifen	22.10	740
Tamoxifen	$\geq 100$	741 742
Auranofin	0.27	743

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747

748 **Table 4: Mode of action determination of drugs inhibiting *M. smegmatis***  
 749 **through whole genome sequencing and variant analysis of spontaneous**  
 750 **resistant mutants.** The table represents the single nucleotide polymorphisms  
 751 obtained through whole genome sequencing of the spontaneous resistant  
 752 mutants raised compared against drug sensitive *M. smegmatis*.  
 753  
 754

Drug Name ( <i>M. smegmatis</i> hits)	Mutated Genes	Rv Number	Positions	Amino acid substitutions	Probable function
<b>Meclocycline</b>	MSMEG_3619	Rv1856c	A/G		Short chain dehydrogenase/oxidoreductase
<b>Meclocycline</b>	MSMEG_5249 ( <i>glyA1</i> )	Rv1093	Ccg/Tcg	P122S	Serine hydroxymethyltransferase
<b>Tamoxifen</b>	MSMEG_6431 ( <i>espR</i> )	Rv3849	ttc/ (Frame shift)	F24	Conserved hypothetical protein
<b>GBR12909</b>	MSMEG_3033 ( <i>aroB</i> )	Rv2538c	Ggg/Agg	G282R	Involved at the second step in the biosynthesis of chorismate within the biosynthesis of aromatic amino acids (the shikimate pathway) [catalytic activity: 7-phospho-3-deoxy-arabino-heptulosonate = 3-dehydroquinone + orthophosphate].
<b>GBR12909</b>	MSMEG_3033 ( <i>aroB</i> )	Rv2538c	gGc/gAc	G284D	
<b>GBR12909</b>	MSMEG_3033 ( <i>aroB</i> )	Rv2538c	Tgc.GTtgc (Frame shift)	C356V	
<b>GBR12909</b>	MSMEG_3033 ( <i>aroB</i> )	Rv2538c	cTa/cCa	L363P	

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758 **Table 5: Mode of action determination of drugs inhibiting *M. bovis* BCG**  
 759 **through whole genome sequencing and variant analysis of spontaneous**  
 760 **resistant mutants.** The table represents the single nucleotide polymorphisms  
 761 obtained through whole genome sequencing of the spontaneous resistant  
 762 mutants raised compared against drug sensitive *M. bovis* BCG.  
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Drug Name ( <i>M. bovis</i> BCG hits)	Mutated Genes	Rv Number	Positions	Amino acid substitutions	Probable function
<b>Florfenicol</b>	BCG_1533 (EchA12)	Rv1472	Gga/Aga	G239R	Possible enoyl-CoA hydratase echA12 [ <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> BCG str. Pasteur 1173P2]
<b>Florfenicol</b>	BCG_3158 (PPE50)	Rv3135	gGc/gAc	G251D	PPE family protein
<b>Florfenicol</b>	BCG_3508 (rpsI)	Rv3442c	Ccc/Gcc	P17A	Probable 30S ribosomal protein S9 RPSI
<b>Florfenicol</b>	BCG_3755c (glpK)	Rv3696c	gTc/gCc	V271A	Probable glycerol kinase GlpK (ATP glycerol 3-phosphotransferase)
<b>Pentamidine</b>	BCG_0763	Rv0713	aTt/aCt	I274T	Probable conserved transmembrane protein [ <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> BCG str. Pasteur 1173P2]
	BCG_0763	Rv0713	gCg/gTg	A281V	Probable conserved transmembrane protein [ <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> BCG str. Pasteur 1173P2]
<b>Pentamidine</b>	BCG_1609 (mmpL6)	Rv1557	Gcc/Acc	A31T	Probable conserved transmembrane protein
<b>Pentamidine</b>	BCG_3755c (glpK)	Rv3696c	gTc/gCc	V271A	Probable glycerol kinase GlpK (ATP glycerol 3-phosphotransferase)
<b>Trippelennamine</b>	promoter region of gene BCG_3090	Rv3065	Upstream gene BCG 3089c (Rv 1904)		Multi-drug transport integral membrane protein (efflux pump)

	glpK	Rv3696c	gTc/gCc	V271A	Probable glycerol kinase GlpK (ATP glycerol 3-phosphotransferase)
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